

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE DEL RIO SPRINGS

The following is a condensation of three articles written for the Prescott Courier Days Past column by Terry Munderloh and available on the Sharlot Hall Museum website www.sharlot.org.

The broad expanse of Little Chino Valley forms an alluvial basing whose waters discharge to the surface in an area of many acres near the Del Rio Springs. Water in the arid southwest has always attracted life. Ancient ruins near the springs attest to prehistoric man's occupation of this valley.

Our story begins when on February 24, 1863, President Lincoln signed a bill officially creating the United States Territory of Arizona.

Brigadier General James Carleton sent John Clark, surveyor of New Mexico, escorted by Captain Nathaniel Pishon in command of a company of California volunteers, to inspect the "gold regions" of central Arizona and to "...have an eye to the best location for a post."

Captain Pishon reported to General Carleton the following: "Captain Walker, as well as other Americans, deem it necessary for the protection of the citizens and the enforcement of the laws that troops be stationed at or near the mines. The site I thought best adapted for the purpose of either a two, four or six company military post, is situated on Cienega Creek, about twenty-five miles northeast of the Mining district." "At this point there is good water, fire wood within two or three miles, and building timber of the best quality: any amount of hay can be cut. The neighborhood abounds in deer, antelope, turkey and other varieties of game."

Their inspection completed, the Clark-Pishon expedition departed the banks of Cienega Creek at Del Rio Springs on September 1, 1863, and returned to New Mexico.

In that same month of Clark and Pishon's return to Santa Fe, three of Arizona's first government officials, Governor John Goodwin, Secretary Richard McCormick and Associate Justice Joseph Allyn escorted by two companies of the Missouri cavalry, left Cincinnati, Ohio, en route to Santa Fe and the new Arizona Territory under the assumption that Tucson would be it's capital.

Even as the Governor's party traveled west, General Carleton was arguing against a location in the southern part of the state where Mexican and Secessionist influences were strong. He favored Chino Valley near the geographical center of the territory and an area of potential mineral resources that could help rebuild the government coffers financially depleted by the Civil

War. Carleton successfully convinced Washington to establish a fort and provisional capital at Del Rio Springs.

In November 1863 Carleton dispatched to Chino Valley Captain Pishon and thirty cavalymen to establish the first post in central Arizona. In addition to the military personnel the expedition consisted of six mule teams loaded with equipment, three ambulances, 500 head of cattle, 1800 head of sheep (allegedly confiscated from the Navajos by Kit Carson) and an extra train of 10 six-mule teams loaded with grain.

The headquarters of the command were made upon their arrival at Del Rio of the 10th of December and the Post of Ft. Whipple was officially established there on December 23, 1863.

The Governor's party learned of their new destination upon their arrival in New Mexico.

In Santa Fe a second wagon train was outfitted to travel with the government dignitaries on the final leg of their trek to Arizona. Two companies of New Mexico volunteers were added to the Governor's escort and General Carleton ordered Colonel Francisco Chavez to take command of the entire party. The Governor's Party, along with an accompanying entourage of pioneers, merchants, fortune seekers and additional livestock, departed Santa Fe on November 26, 1863, and set off for the new wilderness capital. They arrived at Ft. Whipple on January 22, 1864.

Secretary McCormick brought with him a printing press. The first issue of The Arizona Miner, date lined Ft. Whipple, March 9, 1864, reported the following about the fort: "The location is in the Val De Chino, on the banks of Cienega Creek, a never failing stream of clear, sweet water. The wide valley abounds in the best gamma grass, and affords extensive pasturage. The soil is apparently very rich, and aqueguas might readily be constructed, though there is a good impression that irrigation is not necessary."

From a letter written by Major Willis on March 18th we further learn that "the hospital, commissary and quartermaster buildings are finished, also the corral for stock. The men are comfortably sheltered with the few tents in our possession."

However, The Miner also noted that: "The deficiency of this immediate locality is the lack of timber. Fire wood is found on the hills three miles to the west, but logs for buildings have to be brought from Granite Creek, a distance of twenty miles."

Upon Governor Goodwin's personal exploration of the area and the mining districts, he concluded a more strategic location of the fort was necessary for the protection of the miners and ready access to construction lumber and in a letter to General Carleton expressed his desires to see Ft. Whipple relocated to Granite Creek.

On May 11th, The Arizona Miner announced : "The inhabitants of this portion of the territory will be pleased to know that Ft. Whipple is to be removed to a point where it will afford better protection. The site is upon Granite Creek, twenty miles south of this place, and a mile north of Sheldon's Granite Ranch."

A follow-up is found in the miner on May 25th: "Major Willis has announced in general orders that the Fort Whipple, having been removed by orders from Dept. Hdqs., the old site will hereafter be known as Camp Clark, in honor of surveyor Gen. Clark, who first visited the place in August last."

Within three months of the Fort's move, a public notice dated August 15, 1864, and published in the September 21st edition of the Miner stated: "Know all men by these presents: That the undersigned have this day taken up and squatted on that tract of land situated at and near the old site of Fort Whipple, consisting of about five hundred acres." The notice was signed "Postle, Brown & Co.

The Miner reported on September 21, 1864: "Messrs Postle, Brown and Co. have taken up for ranching purposes the old site of Ft. Whipple. The ranch consists of about five hundred acres. They are now cutting some two hundred tons of hay, which they expect of offer for sale in Prescott this winter. Next season, they will have under cultivation about two hundred acres of corn, wheat, etc...."

On January 7, 1865 , Andres Montaugus (Montagues), Jose Delgrallo (Delgado), Robert Postle and J.M. Brown recorded their claim to "four quarter sections of land, situated in the County of Yavapai and Territory of Arizona at a point about 25 miles Northerly from the Town of Prescott, and described in the map hereto annexed. Said quarter sections are claimed and owned in the following order to wit :

Andres Montaugus, claiming the two subdivisions in Section 1 marked "A." Jose Degrallo, claiming the three subdivisions in Section 2 marked B, and the subdivision in Section 1 marked B. Robert Postle claiming the 2 subdivisions in Section 2 marked C. J.M. Brown, claiming the 2 subdivisions in Section 2, marked D and the two subdivisions in Section 3 marked D. All as marked on said map. And further that we have improved said land and are now in possession thereof."

Robert Postle is listed in the census of 1860 at Tucson, age twenty-three, born in England. After the outbreak of the Civil War, he went to Santa Fe to enlist with the Union Army. When he was dismissed on December 31, 1863 he made his way to Chino Valley.

It's believed that Jack Brown was a merchant of Tucson. He and Postle had been school friends in Sussex, England.

The Postle home was an adobe structure, Casa Del Rio. In the book *Cowchips and Calluses*, by Ellen Ginn, it says: "dances were held there. Ladies from the area came in their finery and soldiers from the fort would come in their uniforms. A New Year's Ball was an annual event that everyone looked forward to. The house with its study adobe walls was also a refuge to friends and neighbors when Indians occasionally raided the area."

On November 30, 1866, the Miner further reported on what was now known simply as Postle's ranch: "During the past season, Mr. Postle has cultivated about three hundred acres which have produced crops of corn, wheat, barley, potatoes, and a variety of vegetables; all of which have matured finely and fully and are now being sold in our market for satisfactory prices. The result, we are credibly informed, promises a net profit of near twenty thousand dollars and shows what an industrious and energetic man can do in this country by cultivating the soil under true principles."

The article additionally commented: "Among the additions to this valuable ranch is a very fine grist mill of modern construction, run by water. This improvement is a very important one, not only to the enterprising proprietor, but the surrounding community. But there is another addition soon to be made to the establishment of the proprietor, looked upon by certain interested parties as of the utmost importance to the prosperity of the concern." They were referring to the upcoming marriage of Robert Postle and the daughter of another of our early pioneer families

Two other families had made their way to the Val de Chino. One was George Washington Banghart with his wife Mary and their four daughters, along with Mary's brother, Edward G. Beck. George and Ed homesteaded parcels of land originally claimed by J.P. Osborn on February 10, 1865 marked E on the map and deeded to George Banghart on April 27, 1866. Here the Banghart family owned and operated a stagecoach station for many years. That was later a train station.

Another early pioneer family to arrive at Del Rio was David Wesley Shivers, his wife Sarah, and their four daughters. They left Missouri in the late 1850's for Kansas and then moved on to California. They moved again and eventually arrived in Prescott in 1864. David also recognized the ranching and farming potential of Del Rio and on April 2, 1867, Jose Deldado, quit claimed his tract of land to Shivers.

Between the two new families there were now eight young ladies living within the vicinity of Postle's ranch.

It was Hannah, David Shiver's daughter, whom Robert chose for his wife. The Yavapai County Record of Marriages registers that Hannah Shivers, age fifteen, became the wife of Robert Postle at Prescott on September 10, 1867.

Hannah and Robert had three children: Rosinda Ann (who died in infancy), Robert David, and Alice. Their estate continued to flourish but on April 9, 1871, at the age of thirty-four, Robert died leaving eighteen year old Hannah a widow with a three year old son and an infant daughter.

Hannah remained on the homestead and lived out the requisite period of time there to prove title to the land in her own name. She was issued a patent from the United States in 1874. It's quite probable she is one of the first woman in Yavapai County to receive a land patent.

In 1875, a four-year veteran of the Civil War traveled with a group of cavalry enroute to Prescott. His name was Samuel Rees. He met and married Hannah Shivers Postle.

Samuel and Hannah remained on the Postle ranch and became the parents of three sons: David, Samuel and Carl, known as Tod.

The following year, when her son Robert David Postle was fifteen, he contracted a severe fever and Hannah nursed him through it. Hannah's health had become weak with the strain and anxiety of Robert's illness and during his convalescence, she succumbed to the same fever, dying in 1885 at the age of thirty-two.

Without Hannah the Postle/Rees ranch ran into debt and as the result of a mortgage foreclosure in 1886, was acquired by John G. Campbell and his partner, James Baker.

Campbell and Baker had previously purchased, in 1868, the tract of land originally held by Postle's partner, J. M. Brown (D). And in 1877, they bought the homestead on which the main source of the Del Rio Springs was located. (A)

By this time, the Baker-Campbell ranch was one of the largest spreads in Central Arizona extending from Del Rio northeast to the Verde River, I believe to the Perkins Ranch. Jim Baker and his wife Sarah Ehle Baker lived on the ranch and ran the cattle and horse business of the partnership. Baker was proud of his big stock of horses well known by all stockmen as being bred to imported stallions.

JohnG. Campbell, the financing partner, lived in Prescott. When Jim Baker found the business alarmingly in debt, allegedly due to John's weakness for gambling, Jim filed a lawsuit against Campbell. He prevailed and after a long court case was awarded a large judgment against Campbell around 1896-1897. He also acquired all of Campbell's property, water rights and interests at a sale in 1898 which specifically included the Del Rio tract.

In November of 1900, the City of Prescott acquired from James and Sarah

Baker two parcels: a 128 acre piece of land in Chino Valley and a separate 2.07 acre parcel on which the main Del Rio springs were located. In the same month, a deed from Ed. G. Wells and his wife Rose Banghart conveyed an additional 231 acres to the city. All water rights to the three parcels were also conveyed.

A boiler and pumping equipment were installed at the springhead and a 19.2-mile long pipeline was constructed to bring water to Prescott's reservoir. It was reported in the Journal Miner that the capacity of that spring was about 2,000,000 gallons a day and the daily pumping capacity about 500,000 gallons under 750 pounds of pressure. The system was put into operation in September 1901.

In May of 1902, the city council voted to also furnish water from Del Rio Springs to the Santa Fe Railroad for seventy-two cents per 6,600 gallon tank car load. The railroad transported the potable water from Del Rio to the many locations along its northern lines not blessed with adequate water including the towns of: Seligman, Ash Fork, Williams, Winslow and eventually, the Grand Canyon.

With a reliable source of water, Fred Harvey and the Santa Fe Railroad began their work to make the Grand Canyon a popular stop for modern travelers. In 1901 the Santa Fe purchased a bankrupt railroad that ran from Williams north to a copper mine in Anita. They extended the track to its new depot on the rim and offered passenger service to the Grand Canyon.

In addition to water purchased from the City of Prescott, the AT&SF had their own appropriation rights in Del Rio Springs based on a 99-year lease the railroad secured from the Bakers in 1898. With an assured water supply from the Del Rio, development of the Grand Canyon began. The building of the El Tovar began in 1903.

In 1909, the AT&SF Railroad, in conjunction with the Fred Harvey organization, embarked another new enterprise. They took up dairy farming, purchasing 3,250 acres of land at Del Rio...

The Sept. 9, 1909, edition of the Journal Miner reported the following: "the intention is to cultivate the first year the soil with a grain hay and later this will give way to alfalfa. As soon as the land is in shape the first consignment of dairy cattle will be placed on it, and it is probable that the feeding pens at Peach Springs will be abandoned. The Grand Canyon herds will come to Del Rio at practically the same time, these two stations being the most expensive points to maintain along the Santa Fe. Approximately inside of a year from the present time a herd of 300 Holstein cows will be on pasture at the new location."

By 1913 several structures has been completed at the Del Rio Ranch including a bunkhouse, cow and horse barns, a milking barn, cooling towers and a mess hall. The ranch supplied all the milk and eggs to the western division of the Harvey Restaurant operations and was the wintering grounds for the famous

Grand Canyon mules that took wide-eyed tourists down Bright Angel Trail.

According to Grace Converse whose husband George managed the ranch for thirty years, seven to eight hundred tons of hay were produced annually with half of it going to the Grand Canyon to feed the dude and working stock. During the war when beef was rationed, the farm raised over 5,000 turkeys a year for the Harvey House eateries.

The enterprise proved very successful and the railroad's operation of the ranch continued into the 1950s. The Prescott Courier of Feb. 10, 1956, informed its readers: "Del Rio Ranch, original site of Fort Whipple, first semi-permanent location of government in the territory of Arizona and for many years the source of water for several northern Arizona towns including the Grand Canyon, will be sold by its present owner, the Santa Fe Railroad, this Spring." The Del Rio Ranch passed back into private ownership and remains private land today by Val de Chino.

Today there are plans for a 3,800 home development on both sides of Hgy 89, that includes a school, fire station, hotel, golf courses on the W side and an adult community on the east with trails instead of a golf course, preserving the LC wash.

Del Rio's far-reaching impact on the development of Arizona is a historical legacy we all share. I hope I have given you a better understanding of this legacy. The Springs are one of Arizona's most significant historic sites. We wish it were possible to preserve this important piece of Arizona history.

See: www.sharlot.org, Days Past articles by Terry Munderloh:

[Del Rio's Quick Brush With the Seat of Government.](#)

[Del Rio Springs After Fort Whipple Moved On.](#)

[Del Rio Springs Provided Water For Many Northern Arizona Towns.](#)